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Contact: Tom Daubert 449-2095 ([doebare@aol.com](mailto:doebare@aol.com))  
Or Lisa Schmidt 278-0159 ([alandofgrass@3riversdbs.net](mailto:alandofgrass@3riversdbs.net))

### **Department of Livestock Focuses Intensively on Brucellosis Investigation**

(HELENA) – Acting State Veterinarian Dr. Jeanne Rankin said today that state and federal officials are working as quickly as possible to test the birth herd and any contact herds for brucellosis.

“This is easily the most exacting and most serious disease investigation in the department’s recent history,” said Dr. Rankin. “All of us have been focused on detailed efforts to get answers. We’re working as hard as we can, as fast as we can and so are the federal agencies involved in this effort.”

She said the process of “tracing back” to identify all the cattle that might ever have come in contact with the few that so far have tested positive for brucellosis began in earnest last Friday, when the agency first received word that an animal shipped to Iowa had tested positive for the disease. Under federal rules, if cattle from more than one herd are found to have brucellosis, the state will lose its brucellosis-free status.

“We hope to have some definitive answers by the end of this week,” Dr. Rankin said. “So far, the problem does appear to be confined to animals at two locations, and if we’re very fortunate, either none of the cattle at the second location will test positive or the animals at the two locations will satisfy the federal definitions such that they’re regarded as coming from a single herd.”

The Montana Department of Livestock has been receiving hundreds of inquiries from ranchers, consumers and others, since the announcement Friday. Information will be posted on the department website, [www.mt.gov/liv](http://www.mt.gov/liv) and the Department will work to respond to inquiries as quickly as possible.

On Friday it was announced that 7 cows from one herd had tested positive for brucellosis. The state maintains its brucellosis free status until 2 herds test positive under federal guidelines. If Montana loses status, all adult cattle going out-of-state will be brucellosis tested at the owner’s expense. In recent years, both Idaho and Wyoming have lost their brucellosis-free status.